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Lucerne and banana trash for sheep feeding - An interesting experiment at Carnarvon

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LUCERNE AND BANANA TRASH FOR SHEEP FEEDING

An interesting experiment at Carnarvon

By H. SUIJDENDORP

ALTHOUGH Carnarvon is the port for a large area of pastoral country, local butchers often find it difficult to obtain fat stock for slaughter and it is occasionally necessary to have mutton carcasses shipped from Perth to supply the local trade.

Recently, the Gascoyne Research Station conducted a sheep-feeding experiment, using locally-produced lucerne hay and banana trash for fattening store sheep.

On October 28, 1955, a line of 20 store wethers was purchased from Bidgemia Station. The sheep were all full-mouthed or older and were bought for 30s. each. The average liveweight on purchase was 105.5 lb. but they were very mixed in quality with actual liveweights varying from 95 to 131 lb.

At slaughter on January 25, 1956, the average liveweight was 114.8 lb., with an average dressed weight of 49 lb. The wethers killed out well with a good covering of fat and very tender meat and sold at 55s. each.

DETAILS OF FEEDING

Immediately after purchase, the sheep were given as much lucerne hay as they would consume, in a paddock containing some acacia scrub. After two weeks during which they consumed 3.2 lb. of lucerne hay per head daily, their average liveweight increased to 112.5 lb.

It was noted however that when the acacia scrub was eaten out at the end of two weeks, the appetites of the sheep appeared to diminish and they only ate 2.6 lb. per head per day of the lucerne hay. A decline in liveweight occurred during the next two weeks.

The wethers were then transferred to an abandoned banana patch, banana plants being cut down as required. They received no lucerne hay or other supplementary feed but showed slight weight gains in the first four weeks.

The banana trash was then supplemented by ½ lb. of lucerne hay per head daily and good weight gains occurred immediately. After a fortnight on this ration, the liveweight levelled off at approximately 115 lb. average and was maintained until the animals were slaughtered on January 25, 1956.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the experiment was merely instigated as a preliminary fact-finding measure, it appears that the best results are obtained when some bulk feed is available in addition to lucerne hay.

It appears that store wethers fed on ½ lb. per head, per day, of lucerne hay with free access to banana trash or an abandoned banana block would fatten sufficiently within four weeks to be ready for sale to a butcher. An acre of abandoned bananas would thus return about £40 by the time it was grazed down.

To feed lucerne hay alone would be uneconomic as the return from an acre of lucerne would be no greater than if the lucerne was sold as hay.

Varying demands for fat stock and variations in the availability of stores, suggest that the breeding and rearing of fat lambs may be a sounder proposition.

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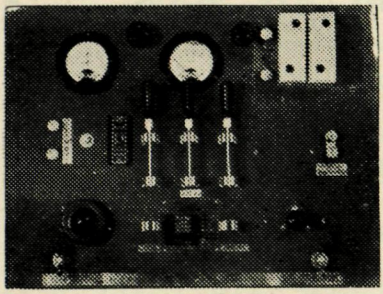

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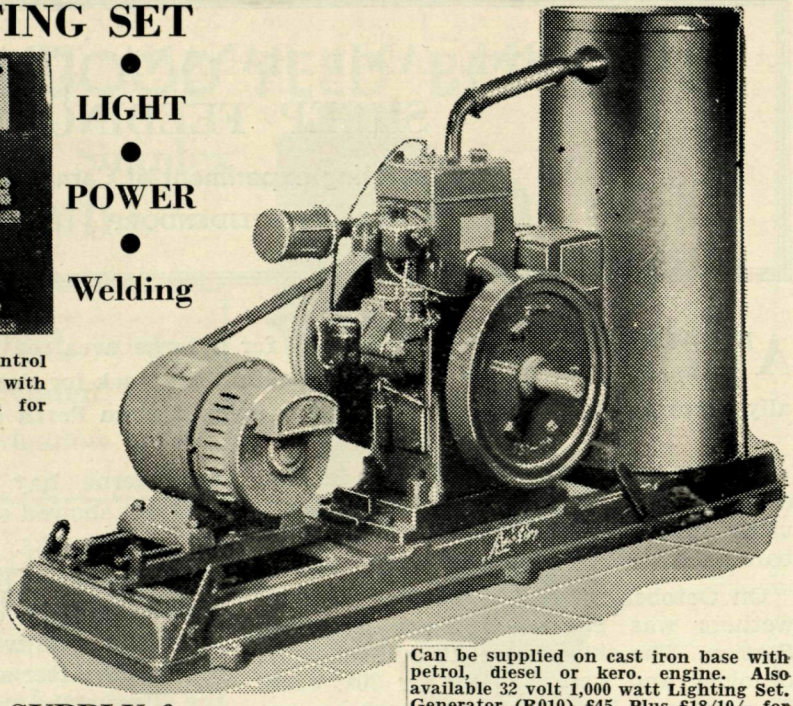

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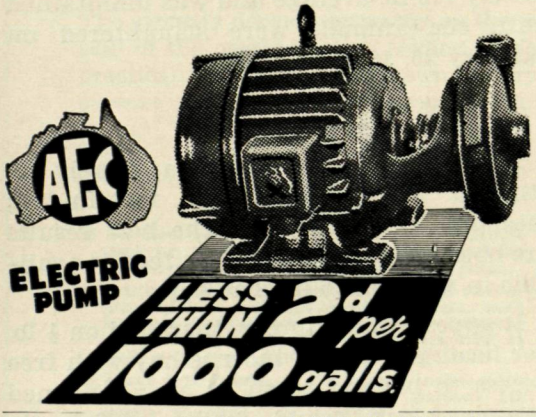

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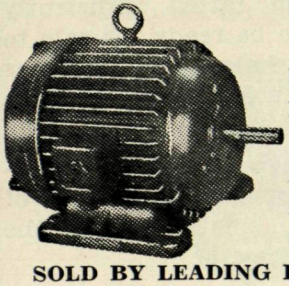

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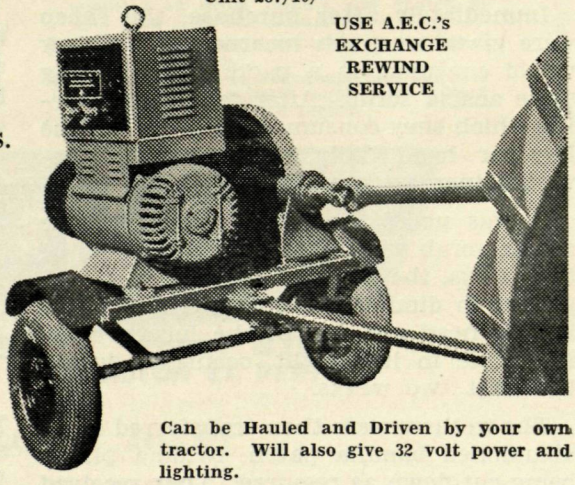

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